



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE PROPOSES TO PROTECT PUGET SOUND STEELHEAD UNDER ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) said today that it is proposing to list Puget Sound steelhead as "threatened" for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. The agency will determine a year from now if such a listing is warranted.

A species categorized as "endangered" is in danger of extinction. One listed as "threatened" is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

NOAA Fisheries Service looked at the biological status of Puget Sound steelhead as recently as 1996, but said at that time the population did not warrant listing under the federal species-protection law. Since then, however, agency biologists have noted widespread declines in Puget Sound steelhead populations, despite substantial reductions in the harvest of natural steelhead.

NOAA Fisheries Service said it would work hard over the next year to more precisely determine the root causes of the declines, which likely include degraded habitat, blockages by dams and other man-made barriers, unfavorable ocean conditions and harmful hatchery practices.

Bob Lohn, head of the agency's Northwest region in Seattle, said "additional changes in hatchery practices by the state could affect the final outcome of the listing determination and that the agency would work with the state's Department of Fish and Wildlife on hatchery reform."

"Even if a listing is ultimately required a year from now, the work already accomplished by Shared Strategy, the sound's grassroots salmon-recovery coalition, will provide a solid foundation for the recovery of steelhead," Lohn said. "We'll continue to work with Shared Strategy to assure that any additional effort needed to specifically benefit steelhead is included as part of our formal recovery plan for salmon."

NOAA Fisheries will schedule a public hearing on the proposed listing before the end of the 90-day public comment period. Comments may be submitted to NOAA Fisheries Service in Portland, Ore., by e-mail, through the Internet, by standard mail or by fax. Specific contact information is available on the agency's website at:

<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/ESA-Salmon-Listings/Salmon-Populations/Steelhead/PS-Stlhd-Petition.cfm>

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

NOAA Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

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